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ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: August 26, 1967

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT : INTERNAL SECURITY - MONTHLY REPORT - JULY

REF :

 DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 BUREAU OF
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
 AUG 30 1967
 C/AM/6
I. SUMMARY - CONCLUSIONS

The month's activities were similar in both kind and numbers to those of the previous month. The guerrillas once more were quiet, possibly waiting to see what the LASO conference might bring, either in terms of an indication of how the power struggle between the various elements vying for control of the communist movement in Guatemala will be resolved or in terms of concrete assistance.

The Security forces did not appear to have rested on their laurels, however, and were responsible for several arrests and raids on safe houses in which arms and equipment were seized. There was even a successful engagement in the countryside between an army patrol and a guerrilla band, in which four guerrillas were killed.

An aspect of the situation that continues to cause some concern is the activity of the armed civilians, particularly in the Zacapa, Chiquimula and Jalapa region. They have become a threat to elements other than the communists, notably some PR leaders, and the atmosphere of fear could begin to adversely affect the efforts of the Plan Piloto in the area.

II. ACTIVITY

With the guerrillas still for the most part under cover, the month was not particularly active.

There were 31 incidents during the month which appear to have

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political motivations. They include 13 kidnappings (mostly if not all for political, not financial reasons), 12 killed in shootings, 3 raids by armed bands in the countryside, 3 bombs and in addition, 31 bodies which appear to be the result of political assassination were found throughout the country. The most active area was the capital and environs with the Zacapa/Chiquimula region taking second place.

Once more, while some incidents could be attributed to common delinquency, little could be attributed to the FAR, and most were probably either the work of the overt security forces - police and Army - or one of their clandestine adjuncts - "commando squads" in the city and comisionados militares and other armed civilians in the country. (See IV below)

III. SECURITY FORCES

The security forces kept continuing pressure on the insurgents for another month. In the capital the police raided several safe houses where they found caches of arms and propaganda and made a number of arrests. As usual questioning prisoners provided information which permitted new raids or captures and still more information. This self-feeding circle is effective in keeping the guerrillas on the defensive and on the run and the steady attrition of the guerrillas and loss of safe houses is telling on their morale.

Police morale on the other hand, along with effectiveness, appears to be on the rise. The model precinct in Zone 5 has been very successful and may be extended to other areas and the Ministers of Government and Finance announced the GOC's intention to add fully 2,400 new police officers to the force beginning in August.

This month the Army, too, could report a tangible victory. (The guerrilla activity in the field has fallen off to the point that there had not been a full scale Army-guerrilla clash since last April.) In an encounter in Jones, Zacapa, on July 22, an Army patrol confronted a band of guerrillas and killed 4. The Army reported no casualties.

The perennial grumbling (in almost any Army) about the Minister of Defense (here Arriaga) seems to be growing louder and has recently been fed by several unpopular appointments. Political maneuvering within the Army may be in for an increase. For the present, however, there is no evidence that Arriaga's position

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could be successfully challenged. Nor does the criticism extend beyond the Minister of Defense to the rest of the administration or the President. This seems to be a private army matter and there is no evidence that the dissident officers are even considering an overthrow of the Government. (See DAO message 0328, August 1967)

IV. PARAMILITARY GROUPS

In recent months the wholly overt and official elements of the security forces - the Police and the Army - have perhaps taken a back seat, in terms of effectiveness at least, to their either more clandestine or at least less clearly defined or unidentifiable colleagues; i.e. the "commando squads" in the city, and the "armed civilians" in the countryside. As was mentioned above, it is these groups to whom the bulk of the "terrorist" activity, particularly the kidnappings and the assassinated bodies, can be attributed. There is no question that these groups played a major role in subduing the guerrillas. There is some evidence, however, that as the guerrilla strength and threat diminished (Col. Arana estimates guerrilla strength in the Departments of their former strongholds has been reduced some 90 per cent) the "armed civilians" took on a new and broader role.

It must be remembered that they were established to fight communists. It is reasonable, therefore, that the most willing volunteers and those most sought after should have come from the most anti-communist group in the area - the Liberacionistas - the MLN. This, however, is probably what makes the groups troublesome now; for as the supply of communists to fight dwindled, the "armed civilians," who number around 2,000, most of whom have been appointed Comisionados Militares, began to focus on other natural enemies on the left - from their viewpoint - of the political spectrum. This has included, among others, local leaders of the PR.

Tactics have varied; some are direct and blunt such as the attempted machine-gunning of the mayor of San Luis Jilotepequez, in which his wife and a policeman were killed; or the kidnapping of the mayor of La Fuente, Department of Chiquimula, and his 2 brothers on July 23; or the machine-gunning of the house of mayor of Zacapa on July 17. Some are more subtle. Many, for example, have received threats, some in the form of a note or letter, some by being listed on a flyer of a secret rightist organization, and some orally, with a particularly effective

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new tactic which has been becoming more popular - the door of the threatened party is knocked on late at night and the threat is boomed ominously into the darkness for not only the man, but his wife and family to hear and heed.

The results of these "terrorist" tactics have created a confused political atmosphere in the region. Many of the PR leaders are openly frightened; some mayors have already quit and others are reluctant to cooperate with, or otherwise identify themselves with the central government for fear they would be branded leftists by the Liberacionists. The effect of this, of course, has been to hamper the development efforts of the GOG through the Plan Piloto.

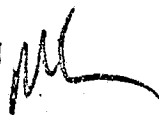
All indications are that the army has no intention of disarming this force in the foreseeable future and the problem will remain with us. Proponents of the irregulars argue that if they were disbanded the guerrillas would come right back in force. Opponents claim that now that the guerrillas' back has been broken, in the countryside at least, they can be held in check by the regular army and that the damage being done by the armed civilians in undermining both the authority of the GOG specifically and democratic institutions in general is too high a price to pay for their policing function. Perhaps the issue will never be fully resolved.

V. INSURGENTS

The guerrillas had another defensive month but even though they did not break cover often, they managed to suffer losses. In addition to the shoot-out with the Army Patrol on the 22nd and the loss of several safe houses reported above under Security, they lost several more key people to police and Army "commando" squads.

Reports that they are short of money, arms, and supplies persist and it is very possible the July 22 encounter at Jones will turn out to be the guerrillas' swan's song in the Izabal/Zacapa mountains for the time being at least.

Reports also persist of new fronts being planned in various parts of the country but to date evidence of any major new front is lacking.

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